



Guide Dogs

By Michèle Dufresne

- 1 Guide dogs are trained to help visually impaired people move around without bumping into obstacles or putting themselves in danger. The dogs' job is to ensure the safety of their owners.
- 2 Guide dogs are chosen for their good temperament. They also need to be smart and easy to train. The most popular guide dog breed is the Labrador retriever. Labradors are a medium-size breed. Their short coat is easy to care for. And they usually have a very gentle disposition. They are calm, independent, and affectionate.
- 3 A guide dog starts training when it's just seven or eight weeks old. It stays with a puppy raiser at the puppy raiser's home, where it is taught good manners. It learns to stay off the furniture and counters and to tell the difference between human objects and dog toys. The puppy is also taken outside often, to become familiar with people, traffic, and other animals.





- 4 When it is a little over a year old, the puppy leaves its raiser and begins guide dog training. A guide dog instructor uses a special harness and a U-shaped handle. The instructor pulls and tugs on the handle in different ways to communicate with the dog. At first, the dog learns to obey basic commands: going forward, waiting, and avoiding obstacles. It then begins to learn how to do these things without its trainer.
- 5 Once a guide dog is fully trained, it is ready to be matched with a visually impaired owner. The guide dog can prevent its owner from walking off a curb. It can warn its owner to climb up or down steps. It can even refuse a command that might put its owner in danger, such as walking into traffic.
- 6 Besides helping its owner to get around, a guide dog provides many other benefits. The dog can encourage a visually impaired person to become more confident in everyday life and make it easier to go out and meet other people. Because dogs need to be walked every day, their owners also get daily exercise, which is good for their health. And the dog and owner form a special bond, almost like the one between family members.
- 7 Guide dogs may have an important job to do, but they are also strong and loyal friends.



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Test Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1) What is the main idea of the passage “Guide Dogs”?

- a) Guide dogs are trained to stay off furniture and counters.
- b) Guide dogs are the best dogs because they are calm and can learn tricks.
- c) Guide dogs are trained to assist visually impaired people.
- d) Guide dogs help their owners stay healthy.

2) Select the most important statement to include in a summary of the passage.

- a) Labrador retrievers are a popular breed of dog.
- b) A guide dog wears a special harness with a U-shaped handle.
- c) Labrador retrievers have a short coat that is easy to care for.
- d) Guide dogs learn to follow commands from their owners.

3) This question has two parts. First answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A: What is the overall text structure of the passage?

- a) Cause-effect
- b) Description
- c) Problem-solution
- d) Comparison

Part B: Select the statement below that best provides the evidence for your answer choice above.

- a) If a visually impaired person doesn't have a guide dog, then they could be in danger.
- b) A Labrador retriever was chosen as the best breed of dog to be trained as a guide dog.
- c) Because a guide dog needs to go for walks, the visually impaired person also gets exercise.
- d) A Labrador retriever is a calm and gentle dog that is easily trained to follow commands from visually impaired people.

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Test Questions (continued)

4) What does the word *disposition* mean as it is used in the paragraph below?

Guide dogs are chosen for their good temperament. They also need to be smart and easy to train. The most popular guide dog breed is the Labrador retriever. Labradors are a medium-size breed. Their short coat is easy to care for. And they usually have a very gentle disposition. They are calm, independent, and affectionate.

- a) endurance
- b) attitude
- c) communication
- d) aggression

5) Put a number in front of the following statements to show the proper order of events for training a guide dog.

- _____ When a guide dog is trained, it's able to help a visually impaired owner feel safe and more confident.
- _____ A Labrador retriever puppy goes to a puppy raiser's home to learn manners and become familiar with people.
- _____ A puppy will learn commands such as going forward, waiting, and avoiding obstacles.
- _____ Calm and affectionate Labrador retriever puppies are chosen as potential guide dogs.
- _____ When a puppy is about a year old, it leaves the puppy raisers and begins its guide dog training.